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POSSIBLE BABYLONIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SO-CALLED PHOENICIAN ALPHABET

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Although recent excavations in the Near East have compelled us to make almost daily readjustments in our views on the development of ancient history, nevertheless the tradition, mentioned by Herodotus (Book v. 58) and other classical writers, that the Greeks (Ionians) adopted for their writing the letters of the Phoenicians, seems to maintain an unshaken hold on the credence of scholars. And rightly so: for the Semitic names of the Greek letters would in themselves be the strongest evidence of an Asiatic origin of the European alphabet, even if we did not have the proof positive in the archaic forms of the letters of the early Greek and Phoenician (North Semitic) inscriptions which have survived to our own day. But the moment we raise the question of the origin of the Phoenician alphabet we are confronted by the widest divergence of opinion. "The prevalent theory, universally accepted till a few years ago, was that of Viscomte Emmanuel de Rougé, first propounded to the Académie des Inscriptions in 1859, but unnoticed by the world at large till republished, after de Rougé's death, by his son in 1874. According to this view the alphabet was borrowed by the Phoenicians from the cursive (hieratic) form of Egyptian hieroglyphics."¹ This theory was popularized and disseminated throughout the English-speaking world by two volumes, entitled *The Alphabet*, by Canon Isaac Taylor, published in 1883.² It received even wider publicity through the same writer's presentation of it in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* (art. "Alphabet"). But today even an Egyptologist is ready to admit that it "enjoyed a wholly undeserved popularity."³

It is not the purpose of this article to pass in review the onslaughts which have been made on the theory of de Rougé, much less to defend

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, eleventh ed., art. "Alphabet." For other theories, see Gardiner's article mentioned below.

² Second, practically unchanged edition, appeared 1899.

³ Gardiner: see following note.

the rival theories put forth by the Assyriologists, but rather to point out a number of things which I believe have unwisely been lost sight of in recent discussions of the problem. All who have given the matter serious attention realize that the relevant facts at our disposal are exceedingly limited in number; and, from the nature of the case, that number is not likely to be increased materially in the future. Indeed, the history of the alphabet bids fair to continue to be a scintillating piece of work, if, as has been maintained recently, "ignorance is the first requisite of the historian."

Three studies¹ by as many Egyptologists have, I believe, brought about a decided advance in our knowledge of the history of the Phoenician alphabet and have done much to rehabilitate the claim that it is of Egyptian origin. While I find myself in agreement in the main with the conclusions arrived at in these studies, I also find myself increasingly dissatisfied with some of the arguments on which these conclusions were based. As already hinted, I have no intention of attempting to derive the Phoenician alphabet from the cuneiform characters. But we know that the cuneiform writing was in use in Canaan perhaps for close to half a millennium before the Phoenician script displaced it. Now it would be strange indeed if this old system of writing had disappeared without leaving any traces behind it.

As the title of his article indicates, Schäfer's argument rests wholly on the vowelless character of the Phoenician alphabet. This is likewise one of Gardiner's chief points. Let me quote first from the latter:¹

Thirdly, the alphabetic and non-vocalic character of the writing is of great importance. The Babylonian and Mediterranean (*e.g.*, Cypriote) scripts, so far as they are known, were syllabic and non-alphabetic, and the proto-Semitic script, if derived from any of them, might therefore have been expected to follow suit. The Egyptian hieroglyphic system eschews vowels, and comprises a full alphabet of consonants besides its biliteral and triliteral signs. The omission of the vowels in Egyptian was undoubtedly due in part to the special nature of the language, and the Semitic languages are very

¹ "Die Vokallösigkeit des phönizischen Alphabets," in *Zeitschrift für die Ägyptische Sprache*, LII (1915), 95 f., by Heinrich Schäfer. "The Egyptian Origin of the Semitic Alphabet," in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (III [1916], 1 f.), by Alan H. Gardiner. "The Physical Processes of Writing in the Early Orient and Their Relation to the Origin of the Alphabet," in *AJSL*, XXXII (1916), 230 f., by James H. Breasted.

similar; still, there was another important reason that was operative in the case of Egypt, namely the particular manner in which it derived its phonetic signs out of its ideographic writing.¹

Schäfer put the same argument into a series of brief propositions which I shall condense still more, retaining, however, the numbering of his paragraphs: (1) The Semitic (Phoenician) alphabet is vowelless. The fact that at any early stage the letters אֵתֵּן were used to indicate vowels does not speak against the non-vocalic character of the alphabet, but, on the contrary, in its favor. (2) In the Semitic languages the consonants are the bearers of the idea, the word-stem, while the vowels serve to differentiate the parts of speech and to indicate their grammatical relationships. (3) In the non-vocalic character of his creation, the "inventor" of the Phoenician alphabet gives evidence of having reckoned "in genialer Weise" with the peculiar genius of the Semitic tongues. (4) But no one would invent an alphabet to write general ideas such as would be expressed by the vowelless קטל (=general idea of killing); he would want it for writing words like *kôtel* (killing) and *kâtâl* (killed). (5) A non-vocalic alphabet is decidedly defective. Hardly any alphabet derived from the Phoenician but felt the necessity of correcting this defect. If the "inventor" did not feel this it was because of the influence of something already in existence. We must presuppose a prealphabetic stage in the development of a system of writing. (6) This is picture-writing. Here vowels might be neglected and ideas expressed. (7) But the language which did this must have had the genius of the Semitic tongues. A non-Semitic people could not have arrived at a vowelless script. (8 f.) We know of no picture-writing stage in the history of the Phoenician alphabet. Therefore we must look beyond Phoenicia. We find it in Egypt.

Schäfer takes up the Babylonian-Assyrian script and remarks that, while it began in picture-writing, it was invented and developed by the non-Semitic Sumerians. The development went in a different direction from that of the Egyptian writing, namely, to syllabic writing in which the vowels are an essential part. The Semites who borrowed this script never thought of discarding the vowels.

Now the idea that a consonantal alphabet is peculiarly adapted to the writing of Semitic languages is an old and a persistent one.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

Just when it originated I do not know. No doubt it goes back to the time when this writing was first compared with European writing. I find it in Fr. Müller's *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft*.¹ It is the kind of thing Renan could speculate about so brilliantly. Schäfer admits that a non-vocalic alphabet is defective, and is sure that a non-Semitic people could not have invented or developed one. But why could not people who say and write 'man,' 'men'; 'run,' 'ran'; 'sink,' 'sank,' and 'sunk' have developed just such an alphabet, had they not been able to take over one all ready-made containing vowels as well as consonants? For just herein lies perhaps the chief peculiarity of the Semitic languages, that in them more largely than in any other group of languages inflection is accomplished by means of *internal vowel change*.² A picture of a pair of legs in motion, with or without the consonants *r* and *n* added as phonetic complements, the whole surrounded by various combinations of prefixes and suffixes, would do just as well to express the English words 'run,' 'runs,' 'running,' 'runner,' 'ran,' 'he runs,' 'he ran,' etc., as to express similar ideas in the Egyptian or Semitic languages. And surely it is conceivable that the non-Semitic Sumerians might have developed biconsonantal and triconsonantal signs as easily as did the Egyptians. For example, we find one of their signs, originally a picture, having the values *gar*, *gir*, and *gur* (Semitic, *har*, *hir*, *hur*); another with the values *dub*, *dab*, *tub*, *dig*, *sumug*, *samag*, etc. Examples could be multiplied indefinitely. When the first-mentioned sign came to have the values *gar*, *gir*, and *gur*, it ceased to represent a vocalized syllable and became a biconsonantal sign. According to the late Babylonian scribes, whose knowledge of the Sumerian may have been defective, the *na*-sign had the values *na*, *ni* and *nu* in the Sumerian (*Chicago Syllabary*, 102 f.). Now I am sure that the Sumerians would have had no more difficulty in reading their writing, if it had expressed the consonants only, than had the ancient Egyptians, for we have ample evidence from the early and late texts that the vowels were a very unstable part of their syllabic signs. The Sumerian was what we may perhaps best describe as an agglutinative

¹ Bd. I, pp. 171 f.

² By this statement I am not denying the truth of the first part of Schäfer's second proposition, but merely stressing what I believe to be the more important matter.

language. Like the Turkish and the Hungarian it was characterized by the principle of vowel harmony and very probably, like the Chinese, made use of tones.¹ It developed vowel signs² alongside of its syllabic signs. But even then their script, as is the case with any script, only imperfectly reproduced the spoken word. The Sumerians probably realized this. If the Semites ever really did think that they could get along with a system of writing which made no provision whatever for the expression of vowel sounds, must we assume that this was done because of the genius of their language? May it not have been due to the fact that they were not as exacting and discriminating—to use two modern advertising terms—in their tastes as were the Sumerians? May it not be that they came by their alphabet at a time when they had not much that mattered to put into written form? But such theorizing—like much of Schäfer's—leads nowhere. We might just as well speculate as to why the crow grew *black* feathers.³

There are, however, reasons for my dwelling upon these matters at some length. Both Schäfer and Gardiner seem to think that there was a great difference in the lines along which the Egyptian and cuneiform systems developed. The former is sure that the vowels were a very important part of the syllabic signs, the latter speaks of the "peculiar manner in which it [the Egyptian] derived its phonetic signs out of the ideographic writing."⁴ We have seen that even in the Sumerian (pre-Semitic) period of the cuneiform the vowels were by no means so well looked after as Schäfer supposes, and anyone acquainted with the Assyrian knows that frequently final vowels, though apparently written, were in reality dropped. One example will suffice: the oft-occurring *mandattašu kabittu*. If the final vowel of the adjective (*kabittu*) had been pronounced it would certainly have been written *a* instead of *u* so as to bring the

¹ Prince has rightly stressed these points.

² One might say that the "alphabet" the Sumerians developed was purely vocalic. But see the following.

³ For years I have been making it a practice to read a few chapters from Wundt's volumes on language ("Die Sprache") in his *Völkerpsychologie* whenever I have occasion to peruse anything from the hands of our Semitic philologists. It is an excellent antidote. The Indo-European philologists are perhaps too skeptical, but this is better than the it-must-be-so attitude of the Semitists.

⁴ See above.

adjective into agreement with its noun in case. In spite of Gardiner's remarks to the contrary, the Persian cuneiform is the logical outcome of the process, already begun in the earliest period, whereby syllabic writing tends to develop into alphabetic.¹ The only difference between the Egyptian and the cuneiform that I have been able to discover is the fact that the former reached the alphabetic stage earlier. But then we must remember that the Egyptians never took full advantage of the alphabet they developed. There probably were a variety of reasons for this.

But there is a more pressing reason for my pushing this matter. No doubt both of the scholars whom I have been quoting would insist that the point of their argument lies in the fact that the Egyptian system developed consonantal letters only, whereas the cuneiform developed signs for its vowels but no purely consonantal signs. Without trying to settle the family disputes of the Egyptologists, I merely take advantage of this opportunity to remind them that the matter of the purely non-vocalic character of the hieroglyphic writing has been questioned by some of their own household.² But even if we grant that there is no doubt in the case of the Egyptian writing, how does Schäfer know that the Phoenician alphabet was originally vowelless? Is the use of אהוי to indicate vowels proof of this? Is there any evidence that these letters were not thus used from the start? If there is, it ought to be produced.

Let us turn to the North Semitic inscriptions. Speaking of the language of the Moabite Stone, Cooke says: "The scriptio defectiva is the rule, e.g., דה is used for the 3rd sing. mas. pronoun, though consonants are employed for the final vowels, e.g. אבי, לפני, בי, בה, and in דיבני, דיבן; the suffix of the 3rd sing. mas. is ה' for ׳." And of the language of the Siloam Inscription: "It will be noticed that the final vowels are represented by consonants, e.g., נקבה, היה, זה, כי, ילכו; but within the word the

¹ Just how this came about in the case of the Old Persian, is not at present ascertainable. Cf. Weissbach, *Die Keilschriften der Achämeniden*, chap. 5.

² W. Max Müller, *MVAG*, 1912, 3 (and already in *Asien und Europa*, chap. v). I ought, perhaps, to add that to me the weakest part of the late Professor Müller's thesis seems to be the derivation from the "Babylonian world-script" of whatever vocalization the Egyptian writing may have developed. Müller is just as positive as any member of the "Berlin school" in his statements as to the non-vocalic character of the original hieroglyphic script. Cf. p. 13 f.

³ *North Semitic Inscriptions*, p. 5.

vowel letter is not written, e.g., צר, אש, ימן; δ = *au* diphth. is written *plene*, ער (from *aud*), מוצא, but δ = *â* is written *defective*, שלש, אמה, קל, הצבם.¹ The same holds for all the other inscriptions which have come to light.

Would it not be better to express the peculiarities of the writing of these inscriptions as well as of the Hebrew and other Semitic writing something as follows? The *scriptio defectiva* is the rule, but some of the vowels are written. The characters used to express these are also used to write certain consonants.

I believe that the cuneiform will help us here. As in the case of the Hebrew, the Babylonian language early dropped initial *w* (*u*). So we have *abâlu* from *wabâlu*. The Babylonian also dropped initial *i*. Consequently difficulties were encountered when the cuneiform was used to write West Semitic words. On the other hand, *i* in *bêli-îa* is clearly consonantal. The same may probably be said of *u* in words like *šêpûa* (pronounced *šêpuwa*?). Similarly *a* seems to have served for ' (spiritus lenis) as well as for the vowel, e.g., *tiamtu*, (cf. *ti'amtû*). Long vowels were indicated by adding *a*, *i*, *e*, *u*, to the syllabic signs, e.g., *šadu-u* = *šadû*, *ma-a-tu* = *mâtû*. In a word, certain signs are used to express both vowels and consonants. It might be urged that here consonants were written by means of vowels, while in the Phoenician or West Semitic script it was the other way round. But this is begging the question. The fact that our Semitic philologists have been vacillating between the terms semi-vowel and semi-consonant is significant. When any attention is paid to the phonetics of modern spoken Semitic dialects, it is discovered that they violate most of the "laws" according to which, so say the grammarians, Semitic words were "originally" pronounced. All of which goes to show that we have needlessly been heaping up difficulties by insisting that the early Semites must have been able to distinguish down to a hair's breadth between vowels and consonants—a feat which our most modern phonetic science has difficulty in doing. We do the same when we dogmatically assert, for example, that each initial vowel in the Semitic *originally* had a "clear" beginning, that is, was preceded by a consonant, **N**, or as we say in modern phonetic parlance, by a "glottal stop," and that

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

only *later* were "gradual" beginnings indulged in.¹ In a word, I believe that a knowledge of Babylonian usage will help us to a better understanding of the vocalization of the Western writing, in so far as this was done through characters which also served as consonantal letters. And that, furthermore, if the Egyptian script really was vowelless, and if the Phoenician alphabet was patterned upon the consonantal alphabet of the Egyptians, then it might not be too rash to conclude that as to the vocalization of its writing, which we grant was "defective," the Phoenician was influenced by the Babylonian, the other script with which its "inventors" seemingly must have been more or less familiar.

But after all, in matters of this kind absolute certainty is not attainable. The best that we can hope for is that the cumulative evidence of a large number of heterogeneous facts, none of which alone would carry much weight, will make the hypothesis we advance seem reasonably plausible. As to Egypt's contribution to the Semitic alphabet, Gardiner has done just this. After having "reached the uttermost limit to which the balancing of probabilities" could carry him, he turned to the task of gathering new evidence. This he found in some monuments from the Sinaitic peninsula, ten in number, "bearing inscriptions in an unknown script, which at first sight appeared to consist of roughly graven Egyptian hieroglyphs, but on a closer inspection revealed the presence of signs not belonging to any known Egyptian style of writing."² In these inscriptions he noticed a "sequence of four letters that recur five, if not six times," which he believes should be read בעל = Ba'alat = Ba'alrus.³ Further than this he is not able to go with the decipherment. Petrie assigned the date *ca.* 1500 B.C. to these monuments, but Gardiner is by "no means convinced that the end of the Twelfth Dynasty would not be a more probable date."⁴ This would make the date *ca.* 1800 B.C. and would push back the beginnings of the Semitic alphabet nearly a thousand years.

¹ Cf. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*, Bd. I, pp. 44 f. "Jeder aplautende Vokal wurde im Semitischen ursprünglich fest, d.h. mit Stimmritzenverschluss eingesetzt." This is the dogmatic assumption of the grammarian. But note: "In den einzelnen semitischen Sprachen treten nun aber vielfach auch schon Vokale mit leisem Einsatz auf." And again, "In neuarabischen Dialekten ist der leise Einsatz oft beobachtet worden."

Op. cit., pp. 12 f.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Gardiner's conclusion that the new Sinaitic writing was Semitic and not Egyptian was reached after he had made a careful study of the "Phoenician" alphabet and its descendants. He advocates "a much greater importance for the traditional *names of the letters*, which are almost identical for the Phoenician and the Greek, and are still for the most part recognizable in the Ethiopic (an offshoot of the Minaeo-Sabaeen)."¹ Lidzbarski had attempted to overcome some of his difficulties by substituting the names *dad*, 'the female breast' for *delt*, *qesheth*, 'bow,' for *qof*, *garzen*, 'axe' for *gaml*, etc. But Gardiner believes that "whether these names please us or not, they are our *data* and we have to accept them, or at least to account for them in some way or other."²

Assuming that the letter *aleph* had that name because its original form was the picture of an ox-head, he looked over the new Sinaitic inscriptions and found this head in a number of places. It closely resembles one of the Egyptian hieroglyphs (F 3).³ Without following him in his search, we will merely note that he finds hieroglyphic equivalents for א = 'ox-[head],' ב = 'house,' ג = 'hook' or 'nail,' ד = 'hand,' ז = zigzag line, 'water,' ח = 'fish' or 'snake,' ע = 'eye,' פ = 'mouth,' ק = 'head,' and, perhaps, ר = 'door' and ש = '[bent] hand.' Some of these are found in the Sinai texts. But here he also found other characters, "foreign to the Egyptian hieroglyphs, but answering well to the names of proto-Semitic letters."⁴

Gardiner was thus led to return to the view of Lenormant, who sought to derive the Phoenician letters directly from the Egyptian hieroglyphs.

But there is one question which keeps coming up in my mind, to which I would like an answer before I am ready to accept the hypothesis of direct borrowing. If the "inventors" of the Semitic alphabet were sufficiently well acquainted with the Egyptian hieroglyphs to single out from among them characters which should make up their alphabet, why did they not take over the alphabet which had long since been developed by the Egyptians? Only a few changes or additions would have been necessary to adapt it for their


¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³ Schrifttafel in Erman's *Ägyptische Grammatik*, 3d. ed.

⁴ Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

purposes. Indeed this is exactly what the de Rougé hypothesis had them do. According to Taylor, the first letter of the alphabet, which was derived from the hieratic form of the picture of the eagle (G 1),¹ in course of time came to look like an ox's head and was renamed. The same thing happened to the other letters.

I cannot make myself believe that the ready-made Egyptian alphabet would have been passed by just for the sake of having an alphabet embodying the acrophonic principle. Of course, there is no difficulty whatever in that part of the hypothesis which calls for the renaming of the hieroglyphic signs by the Semites. This was done to some extent by the Eastern Semites (Babylonians) who borrowed their script from the Sumerians. The picture of the ox-head, named *gud* in the Sumerian, became *alpu(aleph)*. The sign for head, *sag* in Sumerian, became *reš, riš (resh)*. However, the Sumerian values were retained alongside of the new Semitic values. So the sign derived from the picture of the head has the syllabic values *šak(sag)* as well as *riš* in the Babylonian. In the main, however, the syllabic values in the Babylonian were taken over directly from the Sumerian. If the Eastern Semites did this, one wonders why the Western Semites did not do the same. If the Western Semites just set out to invent an alphabet embodying the principle of acrophony, there is no reason for supposing that they needed to go to the Egyptian hieroglyphs for pictures of an ox-head or of a house. It may be, however, that the similarity between some of the signs, for example, the  and the zigzag line representing 'water' in the hieroglyphic, will compel us to conclude that there was direct borrowing of pictures. But why then give the value *m*, from *mem*, to a sign which had already become the letter *n*? If the Western Semites were really acquainted with the hieroglyphic writing, they must have been aware of this.

However, Gardiner is very modest in his claims, as the concluding paragraph of his article shows. "Thus we have to face the fact that at all events not later than 1500 B.C. there existed in Sinai, *i.e.*, on Semitic soil, a form of writing almost certainly alphabetic in character and clearly modelled on the Egyptian hieroglyphs. . . . The common parent of the Phoenician, the Greek, and the Sabaean may

¹ See note 3, p. 35.

have been one out of several more or less plastic local varieties of alphabet, all developing on the acrophonic principle under the influence of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. Further speculation as to details is hardly likely to prove fruitful, in the lack of more decisive evidence" (p. 16).

There is one other matter which I should like to take up, namely, the order of the letters in the Semitic alphabet. Gardiner does not discuss this, but in view of the fact that he rejected so much of what the Assyriologists advanced, it seems to me that it would have been only fair to consider what they have to say on this subject. Perhaps it was overlooked. As far as we know, the Egyptians had no fixed order for their characters, and consequently the order of letters in the alphabet would not be so likely to attract the attention of an Egyptologist.

A good many years ago¹ Zimmern pointed out the remarkable fact that in the case of eight out of the twelve characters in the Phoenician alphabet about whose names there is little doubt (on the whole they are the ones which Gardiner found represented in the hieroglyphs) the order of their occurrence in the alphabet coincides most curiously with the order in Syllabar A of Babylonian signs having the same names (values). His list follows:²

1. *Aleph* = *alpu*, ox (105)
2. *Beth* = *bitu*, house (147)
3. *Gimel* = *gammalu*, camel
4. *Daleth* = *daltu*, door (155)
10. *Yodh* = *idu*, side (140?)
11. *Kaf* = *kappu*, hollow hand (140?)
13. *Mem* = *mû*, water (1)
14. *Nun* = *nûnu*, fish (17)
16. *'Ayin* = *ênu*, eye (42)
17. *Pe* = *pû*, mouth (51)
20. *Resh* = *rêšû*, head (52)
21. *Shin* = *šinnu*, tooth

It will be noticed at once that the two halves of the Babylonian (second) column have to be changed about to get the signs into the

¹ *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, L (1896), 667 f.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 668. The numerals in the Babylonian column would today be somewhat different, in view of our possessing more complete copies of the Syllabar, but their order would not be changed.

Phoenician order. That is, in the Syllabar the signs corresponding to *Mem* and following, of the alphabet, precede the group corresponding to *Aleph* and following. To my knowledge no one has attempted to account for this, and I shall try to do so presently. But inside the groups representing the two halves of the Babylonian column and their equivalents in the alphabet, the sequence of the signs is so strikingly similar that it is difficult to believe it accidental. That the order of the signs in the Syllabar goes back practically unchanged to the Sumerian days had been inferred from some fragments of tablets in the Assurbanipal Library which contained copies of the Old Babylonian version of the Syllabar with Assyrian equivalents.¹ We now have positive proof.² That Syllabar A was familiar to and used by the scribes in Canaan and Egypt is proved by the occurrence of a fragment of it among the Amarna finds.³ Note that I said that the order of the signs remained *practically* unchanged through the centuries. The Amarna fragment shows a slight divergence from the late Assyrian order.⁴ If it were not for this it would be difficult to account for the insertion of two letters between 𐎢 and 𐎣, Nos. 17 and 20 in the alphabet, corresponding to *pû* and *rêšû*, which follow directly the one upon the other in the Syllabar (Nos. 51 and 52).

Now I do not see how we can avoid the conclusion that the arrangement of the letters in the alphabet was influenced by the arrangement of the signs in the Babylonian Syllabar A, and that those who were responsible for that arrangement were familiar with the cuneiform writing. The cuneiform was in use in Canaan for centuries. Of course there may have been slight changes in the order of the alphabet⁵ just as there were in the Syllabar. But how did the *aleph* get into the first place? No answer to this has been proposed, and yet I think it is perfectly plain. Because Syllabar A begins with *a*. Now I hear the objection that *aleph* is a consonant

¹ *CT*, V, pls. 7 f.

² In fragments of the Syllabar found at Nippur and dating from ca. 2000 B.C., Langdon, *Sumerian Grammatical Texts*, Text 5.

³ Kn. 348. Cf. Syllabar A, IV, 12 f., in *CT*, XI.

⁴ In this fragment *tir* is inserted after *dar*; in the *CT* texts this sign is found in Col. VI, 21.

⁵ Such occurred in its later history.

and *a* a vowel. But I have already given my answer to this objection in the first part of the paper.¹

In conclusion: The *order of the letters* in the Semitic alphabet was influenced by the order of the signs in the Babylonian Syllabar A. This, I believe, is a certainty. The *vocalization* of the Western writing may have to be explained on the basis of the Babylonian writing. This I regard as a probability. The cuneiform may not, therefore, be brushed completely aside in our endeavors to write the history of the so-called Phoenician alphabet.

I have touched only incidentally upon the strictly historical problems, because a discussion of these would carry us too far afield. One thing, however, becomes increasingly clear to me as I think over the matter of the development of this alphabet in the light of the history of Western Asia, and it is this: It would be strange indeed if the new system of writing which sprang up in Syria had not drawn upon both of the systems, the Egyptian and the Babylonian, long in use, side by side, in that region. I think Professor Breasted was on the right track when he linked up the Aramaean scribe, pictured on the Assyrian monuments and mentioned in their inscriptions, with our problems. I believe it will be possible to unearth the forebears of this Aramaean scribe, and that when we have done this we shall have come upon the "inventors" of the Semitic alphabet. But I leave this search to him.

¹ The correspondence between the arrangement, within certain groups, of the laws of the Code of Hammurabi and those of the Book of the Covenant is regarded by many as perhaps our strongest evidence of the dependence of the Hebrew law upon that of Babylonia.